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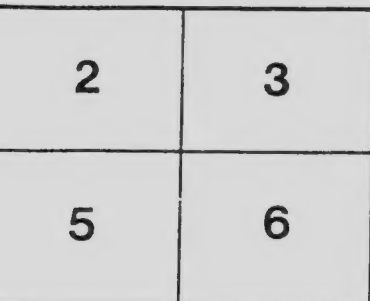
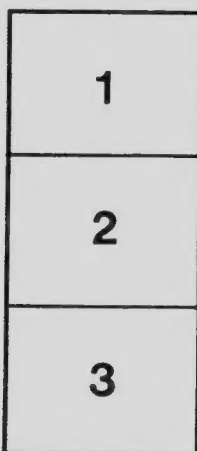
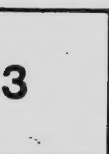
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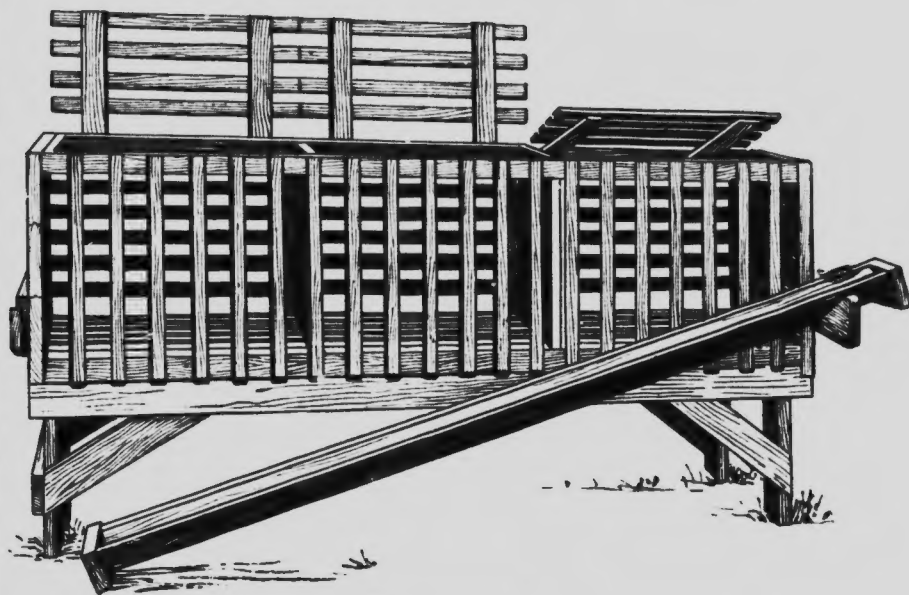
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CRATE FEEDING

BY

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The fattening crate.

DOMINION EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

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CRATE FEEDING.

No poultry intended for eating should be marketed without being fleshed. The easiest way to do this is by crate feeding. The work entailed is less than in any other system, and it is the last few weeks of feeding that pay the farmer best.

How to Make a Crate.

The fattening crates in general use are 6 feet long, 16 inches wide and 20 inches high, inside measurements. Each crate is divided by two tight, wooden partitions into three compartments, and each compartment holds four chickens. The frame pieces are 2 inches wide by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick; this frame is covered with slats. The slats are placed lengthwise on three sides, bottom, back and top, and up and down in the front. The slats for the bottom are $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch wide and $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick; the back, top and front slats are the same width but only $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick. The spaces between the slats in front are 2 inches wide to enable the chickens to feed from the trough. The bottom slats are put $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart; the slat nearest the back of the crate is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the corner of the frame, to prevent the chickens' feet from becoming bruised when the crate is placed on the ground. The top slats are cut above each partition, and six strips, 2 inches wide, are nailed under them. The three doors so formed are hinged to the rear corner piece.

The crates may be placed on stands 16 inches from the ground. The droppings from the chickens are received on sand or some other absorbent material. A light "V" trough $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches inside is placed in front of each crate. The bottom of the trough is 4 inches above the floor, and the upper inside edge is 2 inches from the crate.

If it is desirable to place the crates in tiers, one above the other, the doors will have to be placed in the front of the crates and a pan or board placed under all but the bottom tier to catch the droppings.

Crates may be made from ordinary packing boxes, but a properly made crate will be found much more satisfactory.

Most Suitable Birds.

Cockerels of the general purpose varieties give best results when put into the crates at from four to five pounds weight. Smaller birds when crated fail to flesh as they should. They either cannot stand the forced feeding and confinement and, therefore, lose their appetite, or they put the feed into growth of bone instead of flesh. Birds of heavier weight than this do fairly well, but the cheapest gains are usually made when they are put into the crates weighing less than five pounds, or before they are five months of age.

Strong Constitution Essential.

If the best results are to be obtained in crate feeding, the birds must have strong constitutions. To expect a bird to thrive and put on flesh in the feeding crate is about the same as to expect a pullet to give eggs during winter season. Without a strong constitution results cannot be obtained in either case.

Treat for Lice.

Before putting birds into the crate they should be treated for lice. Dry sulphur or lice powder of any kind will answer the purpose. It should be thoroughly sifted into the feathers, though sulphur if applied too freely may cause a scurf of the skin. If necessary the operation should be repeated once or twice during the feeding period. The crate should be kept clean and disinfected by whitewashing or spraying.

The Feeding.

The beginning of the feeding period is most important. If the birds have feed in their crops they should miss a meal on being put in the crates, and then feed should be given sparingly for several days. To feed birds all they will eat for the first few days means indigestion and thin birds. They have been accustomed to free range and somewhat limited food, and the change to cramped quarters and unlimited food is more than the healthiest can stand and, as a result, they lose their appetite and get thinner instead of fatter.

Persons who have attempted crate feeding have complained that the birds eat well for the first few days when, in spite of all that can be done, they refuse to eat and leave the crates thinner than when they went in. This is the fault of the feeder feeding too heavily at the start. As a rule it is better to leave the birds without any food for the first twenty-four hours after entering the crates. Those that have been shipped a distance, however, are pretty well starved when received, and they may be fed earlier, but care must be taken that the feed for the first two or three days is given sparingly.

The aim should be to keep the birds fairly hungry, never satisfied until they become used to the confined quarters. After that as much feed as they will take, twice a day, should be given. After each feed clean the trough, and if the weather is warm give water at noon to drink. A feed of grit should be given three times a week.

How Long to Feed.

Just how long a period the crate feeding should be continued depends upon the birds and the market. Some birds will stand feeding longer than others. As a rule, it takes at least three weeks to change the texture of the flesh. There may be birds, however, that will not stand more than ten days. These should be taken out just as soon as it is noticed that they are not eating well. Other birds will stand it for four or five weeks, and for a special market it might pay to feed this length of time. But, as a rule, the best gains are made during the first three weeks, and many prefer to feed no longer than this time. Large feeders claim that the cheapest gains are made during the first ten or twelve days, and some may feed for a shorter time even than this.

Birds fed ten or twelve days on a milk diet may be called "milk fed," but the quality of the flesh is by no means as good as the flesh of birds fed for three or four weeks. It is quite possible that in order to make it pay a higher price would have to be asked for the longer fed birds, but they are worth it. Feeders who cater to an extra fancy market have to feed three or four weeks at least to get quality.

Rations.

Finely ground oats, with the coarse hulls sifted out; oats and corn in equal proportion; oats, barley and corn; oats, barley and buckwheat; oats and middlings; barley and middlings; and many other combinations may be used according to the price. Wild buckwheat as sifted out of western grain elevators makes an ideal feed (see Experimental Farms report for 1914, pages 969 to 973).

Mixing the Ration.

Almost any farm ground grain mixed with milk will answer. Whole grain should never be given. All feed should be ground just as fine as possible. A mixture of several grains gives the best results in that the birds do not tire of a variety as soon as they do of one feed. Their feed should all be fed in a wet state, mixed to the consistency of porridge, so that it can be poured from a pail or dipped out with a flat ladle or shingle. The best mixing material is buttermilk. Skim-milk comes next. Better results will be obtained when the milk is sour and mixed one feed ahead. A little salt added to the mash makes it more palatable, and the chickens will eat more of it. If the milk is not procurable and water has to be used for mixing, 5 to 10 per cent of animal foods, such as beef scrap or blood meal, might be added to the grain mixture. Soup made from boiling beef heads can be used in this connection. None of these

gives as good results as the milk, and they are advised only when the milk is not to be had.

Have it Palatable.

In mixing a ration for crate feeding one of the first things to consider is the palatability of the food. If the birds do not like it, they will not eat enough to put on the flesh. Next to this comes the composition of the foods and their cost. The ration must be palatable and one that will produce flesh without costing too much.

Starving.

The chickens must be starved twenty-four hours before killing. This will prevent the food remaining in the crop and intestines, which decomposes and spoils the flavour. Several hours after the last feed allow the chickens what water they wish to drink. They should then have a complete fast until they are killed.

Killing.

For market purposes the birds should be killed by bleeding within the mouth and piercing the brain. The accompanying illustration shows how this is done, though practice alone will make one efficient.

Cooling.

Birds should be thoroughly cooled before packing for shipment. This may be done by hanging on a rack or placing on a shaping board. The shaping board makes a more compact carcass and one that is easier to pack, though the hanging rack is more generally used by large packing firms.

Packing.

When thoroughly cool, pack in neat boxes, preferably those holding one dozen birds. Grade to size and quality, and if the box is lined with parchment paper it adds to the appearance of the package when opened and to the keeping qualities of the contents.



How to Kill.

The illustration represents the roof of the bird's mouth and the veins, the lower jaw being removed. The white mark across the vein on the left side of the bird's neck is the place to cut to bleed. The white mark in the roof of the mouth indicates the place to enter the blade to strike the brain.

Photograph of an original drawing by Dr. A. B. Wickware, Biological Laboratory, Ottawa, Ont.

